

Introduction

Jet ski, Waverunner, or SeaDoo—generically they are called personal watercraft or comically “boatercycles.” I was on one last week end. We were out at the lake with Doug Wunrow. He has a Waverunner which he invited us to come enjoy with him. It is pretty amazing to me how quickly boatercycles accelerate! And of course on the water it feels like you are going even faster than you actually are.

I was on my last ride of the day and went exploring to the far end of Lake Nagawicka. I noticed the engine begin to struggle and my speed suddenly decreased. It was then that I realized I was in a place where the water was shallow and the bottom of the lake was a sea of grass. I knew I needed to exit the area and so I began to make my way back out to deeper water. And as I did the power of the craft grew weaker and weaker. I had been doing 35-40 miles an hour but now I was doing good to do 5 and then 2. Suddenly the red warning light began to flash and an ear-piercing beep began to sound. What was I to do? I shut the engine off. And now what a grand situation I was in. I was stranded in the middle of the far end of the lake. And no one was within 1500 ft of me. For a while all I could do was just sit there. It was a bit of a predicament, but I was confident that eventually help would arrive and everything would be okay. But for Melissa there was fear of disaster. She was back at the beach. All she knew was that I had been gone for a long time and was nowhere to be seen. What was she to do? Could something catastrophic have happened?

Perhaps this fear of catastrophe can help us imagine how the Apostle Paul felt when he learned that false teachers had come behind him to the churches of Galatia. News reached him that they were deserting Christ and the true gospel for a different message. Paul was greatly distressed. He wrote this letter to the churches of Galatia to attack the false teaching head-on and to defend the true gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It was a real crisis of eternal proportions.

Paul had been dictating the epistle, but coming to the end of the epistle, he took the writing instrument in his own hand in order to be emphatic and intensify the message. And this is what he said . . .

[Read Text; Pray]

The false teachers who had invaded Galatia were seeking to convince the recent converts there that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough to be justified. To be saved, people also needed to become Jews and keep the law. What was at stake was nothing less than everything. If a person ever comes to think that his justification before God, the dismissal of his sin, is based in any whit on what he does, he has obliterated grace and has exchanged the true gospel of God for a lie and insured not his salvation but his eternal condemnation. Paul says so solemnly and vigorously at the beginning of the letter. "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."

At the end of the letter, Paul sums up the essence of the true gospel in a solemn word of personal resolve. The essence of the gospel is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the resolve is to make no boast ever in anything except to boast in his cross.

So what does Paul mean by boasting or glorying? Let's consider . . .

I. The Act of Boasting.

A. To boast or to glory in something is to make much of it. Your boast is your glory. It is the act of delighting in something. If you boast, you are unashamed, and you express confidence. You believe in the thing in which you boast. If you glory, you exult; you express joy and delight and even hope.

B. Our summer travels this year took us to Acadia National Park near Bar Harbor, Maine. Wow! That place is gorgeous. There right on the coast are twenty-six mountains. The highest of these is Cadillac Mountain which rises 1,530 feet. From the top of that mountain the beauty is breathtaking. I promise you if you go there, you won't be disappointed.

You know what I am doing? I am boasting a little. I am glorying just a little. I am expressing my delight in a place that is just beautiful. But at the end of the day it is just a place.

C. In his resolve to the Galatians, Paul is not talking about a beautiful place to go and spend a few hours for breath-taking views. He is talking about where he is staking his life, his eternity, his soul's hope. He is expressing the fact of confidence and joy at the core of his being. It is a confidence he is willing to make known before men and before God himself.

And so what is it that fills Paul's soul with glory?

II. The Locus of Paul's Boast.

A. When Paul describes the Judaizers, he says they want to boast in the flesh. They want to "make a good showing." Their hope and delight and confidence are in themselves. They are seeking to please a world that makes its boast in human achievement, and they want its applause. They do not want that world to persecute them for the cross so they make much of the flesh, of human effort and human accomplishment. They are consumed with themselves. Their own works are their glory.

B. Far be it from Paul, however, to ever seek to please the world. Far be it from Paul to ever glory in his own efforts or accomplishments. There is nothing in which he will glory EXCEPT one thing. And that is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is the one thing in which Paul will place his confidence. It is the one thing in which he will delight before God. It is the one thing of which he will be completely unashamed. The crucified Christ is his one and only hope. And it should be our one and only hope. If you have hope in the cross plus anything, you have no hope.

C. Why would/why should the cross of Christ be such a treasure?

1. The cross of Christ is a treasure because of what it reveals. It reveals the truth about who I am. My sin is so bad that the only way for it to be forgiven and blotted out was for Jesus to die this way. But the cross also testifies of God's perfect justice and his mind-boggling mercy. The cross of Christ paints an amazing portrait of God's love for us. Because he loved me he delivered himself up for me. And in the cross Christ provides a model.

He laid down his life for the sheep and so ought we to lay down our lives for him and for each other.

2. But the heart of why we should treasure the cross and glory in the cross of Christ is because of the work accomplished there. The payment rendered by Christ Jesus on the cross was enough. It satisfied the demand. What payment was needed for our crimes, Jesus supplied in full. Christ crucified is the means of our redemption. By his stripes we are healed.

3. Paul mentions right here another reason we should boast in the cross of Christ. We should glory in the cross because of the effect of the cross in our lives. "By the cross the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." Whatever is opposed to the kingdom of Christ is the world. The world's being crucified to me means the world is dead to me. It means when I look at the world I see a disdainful corpse. The world's being crucified to me means I have disowned the world. I do not love it or seek what is important to it. It is what Paul said in Philippians 3:14, "whatever things were gain to me I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ," and "I count all things but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ." Through the cross of Christ the world has become rejected rubbish to Paul.

But in Christ Paul has also become rejected rubbish to the world. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul characterizes the treatment he gets from the world. "We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live; as punished and yet not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything." This is what it means that the world is crucified to me and I to the world. It means that while the world disdains him and considers his a sad and sorry story, he has realized that it is actually the world that offers what is worthless and dead and the world has been crucified to him.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, do not love the world or things in the world. The world is corrupt and the things of the world are passing away. Even the desires themselves are passing away. They are the devil's distraction. Look to Christ. Look to his crucifixion. Look to the atonement he purchased there and let the world's enticements and delights and confidences and

glories be cast in to the deepest sea. Look to the surpassing value of knowing him. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim." Glory on the cross through which the world is crucified to you and you to the world.

John Brown, reflecting on this text, wrote, "Men to whom the world is not crucified, are certainly not believers; and men professing Christianity, who are not, 'crucified to the world' – men whom the world loves and honours, – have cause to stand in doubt of themselves. Where the Cross holds the place in the heart which it did in the apostle's, and exercises the influence over the character and conduct it did in him, it will be equally clear that the world is crucified to the individual, and he to the world."

Conclusion

When we read Paul here, it is plain he loves Christ, lives Christ, and is determined that his life reflect Christ and that he lay hold of Christ. His resolve is that he should never glory in anything other than the cross of Christ. Let his resolve take fresh hold on you this morning. Let it ring out in your heart as well, even as we observe the ordinance of baptism. This glorying in Christ and renunciation of the world is exactly what is portrayed in baptism. The essence of baptism is a pictorial union with Christ in his death on the cross. It is a testimony of following after Christ. It is a testimony of the world being crucified to the believer and they are testifying that they glory, that their boast is in the cross of Christ. As the little song says, "The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back. No turning back."